

Secretary's report of the College's main activities in 2003-2004

Dr Noel CARUANA

1. Council Set up

Following the Council elections, Council posts were assigned as follows during the first council meeting:

- Dr Pierre Mallia- President and Secretary for Ethics
- Dr Andrew P Zammit – Vice President
- Dr Noel Caruana - Honorary Secretary
- Dr Michael Cordina - Honorary Treasurer
- Dr Michael Borg – College Registrar
- Dr J.K. Soler – Secretary for Research and Publications
- Dr Mario R. Sammut – Secretary for Education
- Dr Savior Cilia – Secretary for Information and Communications
- Dr Anthony Xuereb – Member
- Dr Anthony Azzopardi - Member
- Following the resignation of Dr Azzopardi, Dr Philip Sciortino was by-elected

The post of The Secretary for Quality Assurance was vacant until a suitable candidate was to be nominated.

Doctors Jurgen Abela, Mario Grixti and Adrian Micallef were co-opted members of the council during the first council meeting. Subsequently Dr Mario Grixti was elected council member following the resignation of Dr Wilfred Galea.

It was also decided that the following subcommittees would be set up to facilitate the working of the Council. It was stressed that the aim of the council would be to involve the college members as much as possible. The subcommittees set up were:

1. Statute subcommittee
2. Research subcommittee
3. Ethics subcommittee
4. SAC subcommittee
5. Education Subcommittee

In October 2003 Dr Adrian Micallef was co-opted as Secretary for Quality Assurance.

2. MCFD-RCGP Teachers' Course

The second Teachers Course. It was decided by council that a second Teachers course was to be organized. It was to be open to all college members. Preparatory work involving contacts with the RCGP started in October 2003. The members were asked to express their interest in participating in an eventual Course through mailing of information and through the Newsletter (October 2003) and the College's website.

Following the encouraging response, a call for application was mailed to the members in February 2004. There were 19 applicants

of which 14 eventually accepted to participate in the two, five-day Teachers' Course. The first module was held in May 2004 with the second module being held in October 2004.

Following approval by members at the EGM in April, the College contributed to part of the expenses, with the rest of the cost being paid by the participants.

3. MMCFD – RCGP (INT.)

The College has been studying the issue of developing a locally based Membership, for a number of years. During the last EGM, members approved the Council's proposal for the accreditation of the MRCGP(Int) in Malta. Since then the College President has been discussing the issue with Dr. John Howard - Chairman of the International Committee, and matters have been evolving leading to a meeting in London in January 2005 where five Council members have attended a two day seminar on Assessment test development in the MRCGP(Int).

4. Family Medicine as a speciality in the Health Care Professions Act

With the set up of the Specialist Accreditation Committee and in line with the agreement between the Government and the College representatives during a meeting with the Dr L Deguara, Minister of Health and Dr R Busuttil, Director General of Health, Family Medicine was to be listed under such name in the list of specialties in the HCPA.

A Specialist Accreditation Subcommittee was set up in October 2003 and was asked to draw up a document about the Specialty of Family Medicine in Malta, which was subsequently presented and approved, at the EGM in April 2004,

In January 2004, the College was officially requested to submit its credentials to the SAC and propose its criteria to be used for eligibility in the Specialist Register. The College Council through its SAC sub-committee attended the various SAC meetings.

The SAC (government appointed body) issued applications for accreditation in March 2004. The College did its best to inform its members of the closing date due to the short notice given by SAC.

The SAC sub-committee (a College's committee) consulted with two lawyers in drawing up the criteria so as to be as lawful and as inclusive as possible for the benefit of its present and future members. The criteria were presented at the EGM in April 2004 and were approved following a vote by the members present.

5. Continuing Professional Development Programme 2003-2004

- The **Autumn 2003 CPD meeting** could not be organized at such short notice after the set up of the new Council. In October the MCFD in collaboration with the Irish College of General Practitioners, organized a workshop for Family Doctors: **Brief Intervention Training in smoking cessation**.
- The **Winter 2004 CPD** meeting involved a number of presentations by Family Doctors and lectures by Dr Vicky Mifsud and Professor Albert Fenech at a one day seminar entitled "Cardiovascular Disease in Family Practice". This format was in line with the results of a questionnaire performed by the College amongst its members.
- The **Spring 2004 CPD** meeting consisted of six evening meetings spread over six weeks. The CPD sessions were entitled "Antimicrobial Chemotherapy in Family Practice". These lectures were delivered by Dr Paul Cuschieri, Consultant Microbiologist.
- The **Summer 2004 CPD** meeting involved a one evening session entitled "Chronic Pain management" on June 25th.
- The Malta Family Practice Research Network in collaboration with MCFD organized a one day "**Symposium on Research in Family Practice**" on Saturday 3rd July 2004.
- Dermafest 2004 was organized as the **Autumn 2004 CPD** meeting by the college and the Maltese Association of Dermatologists and Venerologists in October 2004

The College is in the process of setting up a number of CPD initiatives, which include:

1. A Diploma in Family Medicine
2. Membership by Examination of the Malta College of Family Doctors.
3. International Membership of the Royal College of General Practitioners.
4. Specialist/ Vocational Training Programme in Family Medicine.

Other CPD projects under the auspices of the MCFD include :

5. Masters in Primary Care and General Practice (in collaboration with the University of Ulster)
6. Diploma in prevention in General practice (in collaboration with the Irish College of General Practitioners).

6. Local News

- In **November 2003** the Council decided to organize an Annual College Dinner for all College members. The aim of this annual event is to foster a sense of collectivity amongst College members. The event was on 29th November at Is-Sajjid Restaurant in Marsaxlokk, the turnout was encouraging and a repeat is being organized on an annual basis.
- The College's new website was launched in January 2004,

due to termination of the previous site. The new website is intended as a communication site and supplements the monthly Newsletter.

- **January 2004:** Council approves the Document drawn up by the Sac- subcommittee "Specialty of FM in Malta". The President and Vice President attended a meeting with the Director General of Health and the Director of Primary Health Care to discuss issues related to the Second Teachers Course. The Government stated that there were no funds available to sponsor a second teacher's course.
- **February 2004:** Council members attended two workshops which were organized with the intent of allowing discussion on the setting up of the Diploma in family Medicine and on the organization of the Membership in the coming months. MCFD issues call for applications in its newsletter and on the website.
- **March 2004:** Official Mailing address set to be the PO. Box address at Gzira Post office. This was done to redress confusion of having two addresses. All mail is eventually redirected to The Professional centre.
- **7th April 2004:** An **Extraordinary General Meeting** was called for members to approve the document that was to be presented to the Specialist Accreditation Committee. The members were also asked to approve the Second Teacher's Course and to decide on Council's proposal for the way in which the course was to be funded. Both issues were approved by the majority of those present.

The draft of the proposed **new statute** was made available to the members via the College's website. At the EGM the majority of members expressed the wish that the present Statute would be amended and not replaced completely. The Statute sub-committee is working on this new initiative.

- **17th April 2004:** Council approves Drs Doreen Cassar and Dr. Mario Sammut as the Second Teachers' Course coordinators, following their nomination by Dr J Howard. The Council also discussed the need for a Booster course programme as recommended by the RCGP, to be set up for Teachers on a regular basis in the not distant future. The Secretary of the Education subcommittee made contacts with Teachers from the first group to obtain their feedback on an eventual Booster course.
- **5th May:** Council approves the purchase of a Dell PowerPoint projector : This equipment is deemed necessary for the current and future use of the College, especially since hiring of this equipment at College's CPD meetings was getting more expensive.
- **1st July:** Dr Soler as the College's representative at the SAC subcommittee informed Council that the SAC had accepted the College's criteria for inclusion in the Specialist Register as had been approved at the EGM following minor adjustments after discussions at SAC. This news was welcomed by all members present.

7. International News

- **December 2003:** Dr M Sammut as College representative attended the Europrev Meeting in December, funding his expenses personally.
- **January 2004:** Council recommends that Dr. M Sammut, Dr P Mallia and Dr J.K. Soler apply for membership in Euract to ensure continued representation of the College.
- **February 2004:** Dr M Sammut signed Convention on Tobacco control on behalf of College. Dr. J.K. Soler attended the European Wonca Meeting in the Netherlands. He acted as representative of the College even though funding all expenses himself.
- **April 2004:** College is invited to attend a Euract Conference for Teachers which is to be held in September 2004 in Denmark.
- **October 2004:** A European General Practice Research Network meeting was organized in Malta.

8. Membership

College membership presently stands at 220.

9. College journal and newsletter

The College Journal It-Tabib tal- Familja is being issued twice yearly in June and December.

The MCFD Newsletter continues to be sent monthly exclusively to college members, and includes local and international news for the benefit of the Family Doctor.

The previous journal editor Dr Jean Karl Soler informed council that he wished to resign from Editor of the journal. A call for interest in the post of editor was issued. Dr Noel Caruana was approved as new Journal Editor in December 2004.

Contributions to both the Journal and Newsletter are welcome and are to be addressed to the Editor on journalmfd@yahoo.com and College secretary on the college's email address.

Vocational Training

The World Health Organization has adopted the position that every developed health care system must depend on the quality of primary health care for improving health outcomes.^{1,2} Following Malta's entry into the European Union, Malta has bound itself to Directive 93/16 which stipulates the need for the setup of Vocational Training for General Practice.

One year on, this training programme has still not started. The college has prepared two groups of doctors who have been trained in collaboration with the RCGP, to facilitate new, prospective general practitioners during their vocational training.

The college welcomes and congratulates Dr Mario Sammut on his recent appointment as the national coordinator of the Vocational Training scheme in the Department of Health. However it notes with regret that the appointments of Teachers have not yet been published. The Vocational Training scheme cannot start functioning without these teachers, who have been trained by the college to assist in vocational training. The college augurs that the Health Department authorities remedy this situation promptly.

1 World Health Organisation. A charter for general practice/ family medicine in Europe. Copenhagen :WHO Europe, 1995.

2 Starfield B. New Paradigms for quality in primary care. British Journal of General Practice. 2001; 51:303-309.)